

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of qualifying a participant over a global network in a transaction requiring a transfer of funds from the participant using a qualifying system, the method comprising:

(a) the participant establishing a consumer funding account by depositing funds in the consumer funding account, the consumer funding account to be administered by the qualifying system;

(b) the participant accessing the qualifying system and entering a transaction requiring a transfer of funds from the participant to a vendor;

(c) the qualifying system reserving a portion of the funds deposited in the consumer funding account according to a transaction parameter determined by at least one of the qualifying system, the participant or the vendor, the reserving step being practiced without the participant providing the funds or any instrument of the funds to the vendor and without transferring the funds or any instrument of the funds from the consumer funding account, wherein an available balance in the consumer funding account consists of an amount of unreserved funds from the funds deposited in the consumer funding account; and

(d) the qualifying system qualifying the participant for the transaction if the consumer funding account satisfies conditions of the transaction parameter.

2. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein the transaction parameter is a required deposit.

3. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein the transaction parameter is an amount of funds required to complete the transaction.

4. (Currently Amended) A method of qualifying a participant over a global network in a transaction requiring a transfer of funds from the participant using a qualifying system, the method comprising:

(a) the participant accessing the qualifying system and establishing a consumer funding account by depositing funds in the consumer funding account, the consumer funding account to be administered by the qualifying system;

(b) the participant entering a transaction requiring a transfer of funds from the participant to a vendor;

(c) the qualifying system reserving a portion of the consumer funding account according to a transaction parameter determined by at least one of the qualifying system, the participant or the vendor, wherein step (c) is practiced by reserving a first portion of the funds deposited in the consumer funding account corresponding to a required deposit and reserving a second portion of the funds deposited in the consumer funding account corresponding to an amount of funds required to complete the transaction, the reserving steps being practiced without the participant providing the funds or any instrument of the funds to the vendor and without transferring the funds or any instrument of the funds from the consumer funding account, wherein an available balance in the consumer funding account consists of an amount of unreserved funds from the funds deposited in the consumer funding account; and

(d) the qualifying system qualifying the participant for the transaction if the consumer funding account satisfies conditions of the transaction parameter.

5. (Original) A method according to claim 1, further comprising releasing the reserved portion of the consumer funding account when the transaction is completed.

6. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein step (c) is practiced by querying a network website server that maintains the consumer funding account.

7. (Currently Amended) A computer system for effecting qualifying of a participant over a global network in a transaction requiring a transfer of funds from the participant to a vendor, the computer system comprising:

at least one user computer running a computer program that requests information according to a transaction inquiry input by the participant; and

a system server running a server program, the at least one user computer and the system server being interconnected by a computer network, upon access to the system server by the participant, the system server determining whether the participant has established a consumer funding account by depositing funds in the consumer funding account, and if the participant has established the consumer funding account, the system server reserving a portion of the funds deposited in the consumer funding account according to a transaction parameter determined by at least one of the system server, the participant or the vendor, the system server reserving the portion of the funds without the participant providing the funds or any instrument of the funds to

the vendor and without transferring the funds or any instrument of the funds from the consumer funding account, wherein the system server administers the consumer funding account, wherein an available balance in the consumer funding account consists of an amount of unreserved funds from the funds deposited in the consumer funding account, and wherein the system server qualifies the participant for the transaction if the consumer funding account satisfies conditions of the transaction parameter.

8. (Currently Amended) A non-transitory computer-readable medium programmed for qualifying a participant via a qualifying system over a global network in a transaction requiring a transfer of funds from the participant, the non-transitory computer-readable medium comprising:

means for the participant to establish a consumer funding account by depositing funds in the consumer funding account, the consumer funding account to be administered by the qualifying system;

means for the participant to access the qualifying system and to enter a transaction requiring a transfer of funds from the participant to a vendor;

means for the qualifying system to reserve a portion of the funds deposited in the consumer funding account without the participant providing the funds or any instrument of the funds to the vendor and without transferring the funds or any instrument of the funds from the consumer funding account, according to a transaction parameter determined by at least one of the qualifying system, the participant or the vendor, wherein an available balance in the consumer funding account consists of an amount of unreserved funds from the funds deposited in the consumer funding account; and

means for the qualifying system to qualify the participant for the transaction if the consumer funding account satisfies conditions of the transaction parameter.

9. (Canceled)